REMARKS

Claims 6 and 9 have been amended with a view to overcoming the rejection under 35 USC §112. Reconsideration of these claims is respectfully requested.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1 - 7 and 9 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gerlach (US 4 744 906), in view of Baurmeister (US 6 866 783) and he has rejected claim 8 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gerlach in view of Baurmeister.

Gerlach (US 4 744 906) discloses porous fibers and membranes and methods for their preparation. The fibers are characterized by a smooth porous surface and an apparent density of between 10 and 90% of the true density of the polymeric starting material. The process involves the formation of a homogeneous mixture of at least two components one of which is a meltable polymer and another, a liquid which is inert with respect to the polymer. The mixture is of a binary type wherein there is a temperature range of complete miscibility and a range with a miscibility gap. The mixture is extruded at a temperature above the separation temperature into a bath containing at least some inert liquid at a temperature below the separation temperature so that, upon introduction of the mixture into the bath, the fiber structure of the product is fixed. In other words, the patent relates to porous fibers or membranes in the form of tubes or foils comprising certain materials.

Baurmeister (US 6 866 783) relates to a membrane module for the treatment of liquids including first and second membrane elements arranged in a housing with their ends embedded in spaced end walls.

In contrast, the present invention relates to a membrane body comprising at least one flat membrane and a hollow membrane extending longitudinally along the flat membrane and being at least partially surrounded by the at least one flat membrane along the length of the hollow membrane.

Such an arrangement is now defined more distinctly in claim 1. Neither of the references discloses a membrane assembly comprising a combination of a flat and hollow membrane wherein the hollow membranes are incorporated with the flat membranes to form a combined membrane structure: In Fig. 1 of the present application, the hollow membranes are

fully embedded in the flat membranes. In Fig. 2a, the hollow membranes extend in spaced relationship and are joined by flat membranes disposed in the spaces between the hollow membranes; in Fig. 2b, the hollow membranes are partially embedded - over their length - in the flat membranes and in Fig. 3 the hollow membranes are sandwiched between flat membranes in which they are partially embedded over their length. A combination of the references cited by the Examiner cannot possibly lead to the arrangement as now more clearly defined in claim 1.

Reconsideration of claim 1 as amended is respectfully requested.

Claims 2 to 4 have been amended also to more distinctly define the membrane body according to the invention. None of the arrangements as defined in amended claims 2 - 4 is disclosed in either of the cited references nor will a combination of the two cited references lead to the claimed arrangements.

Claims 5 to 9 define particular advantageous materials of which the membrane bodies, according to the present invention, preferably consist. The materials are of course generally known, however these claims depend directly or indirectly on claim 1 and consequently include all the features of claim 1, that is, they define that the novel membrane bodies consist advantageously of certain materials.

Consequently, these claims ought to be considered to be patentable together with claim 1.

Reconsideration of the dependent claims 2 to 9 is respectfully requested and allowance of claims 1 to 9 is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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